



## Illegal or Incompatible?

### Managing the consequences of international trade agreements on local livelihoods.

The conservation and wise use of tropical forest resources is of global concern. Recently, the international debate has been focusing on the issue of illegal logging and the legality of timber as a contribution to sustainable management of forests. This is reflected in the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative launched by the EU. Part of the initiative is the development of voluntary partnership (trade) agreements (VPA) with a number of important timber trade partner countries. These agreements are designed to tackle illegal logging and its associated trade. In September 2008, Ghana was the first country to sign a VPA agreement with the EU. Success of the VPAs requires the associated change processes to include social and environmental issues around forestry. An important question that has been largely overlooked in FLEGT processes so far is the extent to which the VPA agreement affects the livelihoods of rural communities, especially those engaged in different commercial timber production systems which are recognized in the VPA as being either legal or illegal.

**The Illegal or Incompatible? (Iol?) project (2008 – 2010)** aims to strengthen livelihood considerations in forest policy to enhance its effective implementation. The project at the interface of science and policy is carried out by local and Dutch partners in Ghana and Indonesia. These two countries recognise the urgency to address legality of logging practices. Partner organisations and government officials in both countries have indicated the need to have better insight into how the VPA implementation affects forest management practices and local livelihoods, as well as the need to improve communication between researchers and policy

makers on how to incorporate such insights into the VPA process.

*The project objectives are:*

1. *to develop broadly supported governance mechanisms that manage the consequences of VPA timber legality standards on local livelihoods; and*
2. *to strengthen the capacity of actors to (re)negotiate institutional arrangements for sustainable resource use.*

Action research will be the projects' main tool to develop mechanisms for improved policy dialogue and stakeholder participation in a limited number of pilots. The comparison of action learning experiences in the two countries will offer useful insights in the ways policy dialogue and policy implementation can be reinforced by science. The project postulates that competing claims by global, national and local stakeholders on the natural resource base provides the context for rural livelihood options, and that alternative scenarios for resource use need to be generated to inform a process of negotiation between the claiming stakeholders. This is perceived to lead to better informed policy, enhanced support for implementation and more transparent and equitable forest management (including more prominent livelihood considerations).

The project targets the stakeholders in chainsaw lumbering, in particular those directly involved in this practice; national Government agencies dealing with forest, tax and law enforcement (such as the Forestry Commission); regional and district governments; the supplying and downstream industry of chainsaw logging (suppliers of chainsaws, buyers of lumber); affected owners and right holders of forest resources (traditional rulers and local communities), the "regular" sawmilling industry and existing community forestry organisations.

The Illegal or Incompatible? Project (2008 – 2010) is part of the Wageningen University & Research Centre and DGIS Partnership.

More information and contact details:  
[www.vpa-livelihoods.org/homepage.aspx](http://www.vpa-livelihoods.org/homepage.aspx)